

THE EFFECT OF LEISURE TIME ON TOURISTIC RESOURCES AND ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract

The presence of the "actors" on the tourist stage of Romania brings in the context of socioeconomic, cultural and educational life needs, wishes, proposals and suggestions for the improvement of tourism infrastructure and also for an increase in the diversity of leisure activities. The development of technique, technology and computer technology have contributed to the multiplication of tourism products and services which led to an improved quality of life. At the same time, identification of tourism decision-making elements to ensure sustainable economic growth, job creation and social cohesion represent an imperative of the current period. The presence of natural resources, growing tourism infrastructure and the increase in household income and leisure time have an increasingly higher importance in the development of tourism in Romania and in other countries as well.

Key words: *Leisure time, quality of life, emotional wellbeing, tourism supply, tourism demand.*

JEL Classification: F60, I00, M30

I. INTRODUCTION

The main results regarding tourism highlight the fact that it acts as a stimulating element of the global economic system; it assumes a specific demand for goods and services, demand that drives an increase in their production. This production is materialized in developing tourism structures, in the construction and development of new means of transportation, leisure facilities for winter, water sports, etc. Therefore, achieving these elements and the results of their use has confirmed the existence of interdependence between increasing production and productivity which leads to an increase leisure time.

The notion of "leisure time" was a "myth" then (in the pre-modern eras, leisure was located on religious holidays and weekends based on religion - the Christian Sunday, Saturday at Hebrew etc.) at the beginning of the modern economy, when the average life expectancy was 35-36 years (around 1800), when labor productivity was very low (it has increased in the last two centuries with an average annual rate of 3-4 percent; 30-50% of the yields of that productivity turned into leisure time - it (leisure) increased from 3 years in 1800 to 19 years in 2000), when the travel speeds and spatial mobility of the population was low and the infrastructure was insufficiently developed. (Roger Sue, 1982).

As the modern world has enriched the dimensions of its daily life it realized more and more that free time is an existential resource with a determining role in increasing the quality of life. Therefore, changes in the nature, structure and organization of modern non-agricultural labor and on the perception on labor have expanded leisure time. At the same time, the gradual urbanization of modern life, shortening work under pressure of vindictive actions of professional organizations, trade unions and political organizations increased the size of leisure segment. We're talking about a leisure time which is complementary to the work time resulting from reorganization of work and thus the decrease in working time. In this aspect, leisure has the function of rest and recreation (Mihaela Dinu, 2002) and an increase in its size leads to the development of specific activities, generally activities from the public and personal services sector (Cosmescu Ion, 2008). Also, the multiplication of leisure activities coincides with the emergence of new industries, of specific infrastructure or, on the contrary, with the recession of industries, of certain products or services. So leisure activities require a certain space organization at all levels (household, local, national territory right up to regional space, continental, planetary). Also, the increase in leisure time required creating a culture of how to spend free time (listening to music, watching television, attending church, reading, meetings and parties with friends and family, leisure areas, theaters, resorts, sporting pursuits, individual games, collective games, etc..) adapted to each person according to the period of free time (daily, during week-ends, during rest leaves etc.).

II. LEISURE TIME VERSUS TOURISM

In the world of internet, Facebook and mobile telephony, achieving group tours, trekking and leisure with friends, colleagues and family can be made much easier and can be recommended to others by a simple photo or video posted on a social networking site. The presence of a growing number of people who want to socialize and find new friends or are keen to find old friends, review old friends, former classmates or family members materializes under the form of trips, party holidays, organizing meetings in locations designed for leisure tourism. In a word, leisure can be associated with the concept of tourism, a concept understood by most people as the place of departure of the idea of tourism.

Currently the supply tourism responds to the increased demand coming from those who want to spend their free time in a pleasant way. It can be observed that there is a developing of tourist activity which has been determined not only by the desire to escape from the everyday life, but also their need to spend free time in a pleasant way. By developing this idea of spending free time we find the term in question recorded several interpretations. Thus, Aristotle, in "Politika", wrote: "We work to have free time" (Sellin, T vol 313 quoted Cosmescu I. 1998). In appreciation of other analysts, "Free time is preferable to labor, is the goal of those who work". (N. Miller, D. Robinson, 1963, cited by Cosmescu I. 1998).

Regarding the qualitative side of how leisure time is spent Aristotle believes: "The ability to correctly use free time zone is the basis of life. Nature requires us to not only to work well but also to lounge too". (Sellin, T vol 313 quoted Cosmescu I. 1998).

According to Miller and Robinson, leisure relates to the periodization of time available to the individual, after the necessary work or other activities and obligations that must be met; it has to be consumed by the individual option. Typical to this option is segmentation of methods of using free time depending on the size, location (daily free time, weekly, of annual leave etc.). It is noted so that daily leisure is used for self training, fun activities, meetings, and free time at the weekend will be used for practicing tourism, sports activities, watching shows etc. In the case of leave, for example, leisure is designed primarily for tourism, spa treatments, for cultural purposes, etc. (Ionciă Maria 2003). Leisure length is determined by the size of the time budget components for individuals.

The satisfaction felt by individuals during the period for tourism is manifested by those states of contentment materialized in an increase in quality of life. So it's about making an agreeable life, based on personal and social wellbeing, the general social protection and social progress (Huttman and Liner, 1978). Most authors identify five areas relevant to assessing the concept of quality of life, namely: physical, material, social, emotional and productive wellbeing. In support of these views are made several arguments that include the five areas in the definition of quality of life as follows:

- a large percentage (over 80%) of the definitions that attempt to identify areas of life including emotional wellbeing in some form (satisfaction, happiness etc.), physical, material wellbeing and productive wellbeing;
- a second argument is represented by the results of surveys on the most important areas of life. The first survey (Abrams, 1973), highlighted the most important areas as: physical, social, material and productive wellbeing. In a second survey (Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, 1976) subjects were asked to assess the importance of domains on a scale with five items. As a percentage, the score was: physical wellbeing 91%, 89% social, material 73%, 70% productive. From the first two surveys is noted that it was not mentioned emotional wellbeing. Finally, in a third survey (Krupinski, 1980), those surveyed prioritized areas after their importance. The percentages obtained were: physical wellbeing 97%, social 81%, emotional 86%, material 83% and productive 78%;

- a third argument shows that the relevance of these domains for the quality of life is given by the volume of variance that each explains in the total variation of subjective quality and satisfaction in life.

Identifying the five representative areas of defining quality of life is characterized by uniqueness and variability for each individual. Meanwhile complementarily of these areas with services, namely with the tourist ones, is the argument that emphasizes the role of tourism in quality of life.

III. THE EFFECT OF TOURISM

Improving tourism services due to development of transport infrastructure, upgrading of access roads and land edges (sidewalks, curbs, green spaces, etc), the extension of utilities (extension of water and gas), the renovation, reconstruction and preservation of public buildings (cultural organizations), objectives of cultural heritage (memorials, museums, town halls, hospitals, parking facilities, markets, fairs spaces, etc..) of creation, modernization of public spaces of recreation (parks, playgrounds, sports fields, bike lanes, etc.), of wholly tourism infrastructure leads to higher living standards, improving accessibility and increase in the attractiveness of the territory for investors.

In this context, the motivational effect for tourism lies in attractiveness of areas with tourism potential in the tourism personnel training and recreational activities offered to tourists for leisure. These indispensable elements are found in close interdependence of tourism demand and supply and also with economic indicators that contribute to the socio-economic development of a region. Therefore, tourism is one of the industries that grow fast worldwide and at the same time the main source of foreign income for a significant number of countries. For Romania, although tourism has a great multiplier effect (each euro invested yields a return of 1.63 for the economy – while the EU average is 1.16 euros), it remains a mirage for the Romanian GDP.

This assertion follows from the fact that the Romanian tourism contributed 5.1% of GDP in 2013, placing Romania on 154 in the world, in 184 countries (according to a report by the World Tourism Council - WTTC). Please note that the total contribution of tourism to GDP includes business directly generated by this activity such as accommodation, transport, attractions, various entertainment, shopping, food expenditures and investments in tourism and hospitality, plus income generated indirectly as gains of suppliers deserving projects or facilities from tourism and expenses arising in economy by the sector employees.

More specifically, the benefits brought by the tourism sector both direct and indirect in employment is estimated at 212,500 jobs, respectively 500 400 jobs, a situation that places Romania in the last position among neighboring countries and ranks 136 in world. In this context we mention that with a 5.1% total contribution of tourism to GDP, Romania appears last in Europe, surpassed among others by Albania (16.7% of GDP), Bulgaria (13.3%), Hungary (10.6%), Czech Republic (8.4%) and Slovakia (6%).

The statistics confirm the need to address strategies that lead to an increase in demand for tourism as we know that in any economic activity, the main development is the demand for the final product of that activity. This is achieved through ongoing education of the population, increasing investment in research, development and innovation, through the adoption of legislation in accordance with the situation in Romania, etc.. At the same time, finding solutions to solve these cases have as a starting point the current situation of tourism in our country and an analysis of issues concerning the understanding of the rights and obligations of both producers, consumers and institutions involved in maintenance and implementation of legislation.

With these proposed issues for review, we will present the survey conducted by the European Consumer Centre in Romania (ECC Romania) in period 13.03.2014-16.03.2014. During this period ECC Romania participated in the Romanian Tourism Fair - Spring Edition. With the occasion of this event ECC Romania divided in 4 days of participation a number of 2265 brochures to those attending, booklets on various topics, and provided information and free advice to those interested. Meanwhile ECC Romania has drafted a questionnaire on "awareness of consumer rights" to identify "potential problems" that respondents faced so far and what solutions can be taken to overcome them.

This questionnaire comprises of 6 questions representative and was completed by a total of 150 people

The results obtained by processing data from the questionnaire were:

- ✓ The first question: "Have you ever traveled to other EU countries?", 93% of respondents answered yes, and the remaining 7%, negative;
- ✓ Second question: "Have you ever addressed to a specialized consumer protection institution?", Only 12% said yes and 88% never addressed to such an institution;
- ✓ The question: "Do you know the European consumer rights?" Only 39% of respondents know their rights, and 61% did not know;
- ✓ For the question: "Have you encountered problems during transport?", 35% of respondents have encountered various problems during transport, and in the case of 65% of respondents there were no incidents;
- ✓ Regarding the question: "What complaints did you have?", 17% of respondents had transportation problems (plane, bus), 45% had problems with baggage (loss, damage), 31% had problems with products purchased in that country, and the remaining 7% had other problems;
- ✓ The last question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you consider that the European Consumer Centre project in Romania implemented by ACP (Association for Consumer Protection) is a good initiative?", 87% completely agreed with the establishment and functioning of ECC Romania, 10% agreed, and the remaining 3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The conclusion from these results underlines the fact that most of the respondents had problems when traveling abroad, so 45% of them had problems of loss or damage to baggage.

Issues raised remain unresolved due to the fact that a significant percentage of 88% of the respondents did not claim the complained problems. Therefore they do not have the legal rights granted nor was it possible to identify them by the institutional framework.

Gratifying is that respondents were receptive and fully agreed on the importance of the existence of the European Consumer Centre in Romania. The center which is found across Europe as the ECC-Net is composed of ECCs from 30 countries (28 EU Member States plus Norway and Iceland). Meeting these countries in a common organization aims at the following:

- ✓ Creating confidence in the European internal market,

- ✓ Providing useful information on consumer rights
- ✓ Advice and assistance in cross-border purchases.

IV. CONCLUSION

With a remarkable potential in tourism (natural resources) which can produce effects on other areas of economic activity we see that according to the results Romania owns a first place in disinterest, mistrust, lack of initiatives to revitalize tourism and competitive advantage. We believe that Romania has problems with promoting itself, meaning "Romania does not know how to sell itself". This is why it only scores 123 out of 140 countries in a top that analyses brands and the promoting strength of countries.

To remedy these deficiencies it is necessary to improve promoting, to organize many events that materialize in seminars, trade fairs, road shows, tourist events with many participants, where journalists and travel consultants from Western countries, China, U.S. and so on, can be invited, which would then attract more tourists.

At the same time, attracting investment and efficiently promoting natural spas, the Danube Delta and regions with mansions must be a priority and would lead to a competitive advantage. Also, an improvement in the quality of tourism, an increase in the number of qualified personnel in tourism, improving tourism infrastructure and promoting youth tourism (especially the one in Bucharest and Mamaia) can be an open gate for tourists, both domestic and from foreign.

Therefore, the main priorities can be found in all the solutions mentioned above and require a better correlation amongst the decision-making factors at the macroeconomic level.

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